

Fitger Brewery Complex  
600 East Superior Street  
Duluth  
St. Louis County  
Minnesota

HAER No. MN-3

HAER  
MINN,  
69-DULU,  
7-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
Rocky Mountain Regional Office  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Fitger Brewery Complex

HAER No. MN-3

Location: 4 blocks east of central business district of Duluth  
600 East Superior Street  
Duluth, St. Louis County, Minnesota

Date of Construction: 1911

Present Owner: Brewery Limited Partnership  
4744 IDS Center  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Fitger Brewing Company complex in Duluth is a prominent example of late nineteenth and early twentieth century industrial architecture and is a representative of the importance of Minnesota's brewing industry in a technological and economic framework.

Report Assembled by: Jack Helms  
Brewery Limited Partnership  
Minnesota, Minnesota

Edited and  
Transmitted by: Jean P. Yearby, HAER, 1985

Architecturally, the Fitger Brewing Company represents a distinctive form of industrial architecture, best described as being of functional design reflecting the requirements of the processes which occurred within them. In addition, the buildings reflected the architectural tastes of the period; in this case, the popular Richardsonian Romanesque style as interpreted by prominent local and national architects, Traphagen and Fitzpatrick and Louis Lehle. Lehle was a Chicago architect noted for designs exhibited in major breweries throughout the United States around the turn of the century. His expertise is noted in both the design of the buildings and in the incorporation of innovative technological advancements for the competitive and scientific promotion of the brewing industry. Further, the highly refined utilization of native stone on the Superior Street facades of the many sections of the brewery make Fitger's one of the most prominent examples of this type of stonework in Duluth and in northeastern Minnesota.

Brewing operations began on this site in 1869 with a small brewery operated by Nicholas Decker. After two changes in ownership, the A. Fitger & Company - Lake Superior Brewery was formed in 1883. Between 1886 and 1911, the company undertook an extensive building program which included most of the existing buildings, demolishing or incorporating portions of the earlier structures into an industrial complex capable of producing 100,000 barrels a year. The last major structure to be added to the complex was a gymnasium in 1920. Limited additions and alterations were made through 1964. The brewery discontinued operations in 1972.

Historically, at the time the Fitger Brewing Company closed in 1972, it was Duluth's oldest continually-operating industry, having begun production in 1859 and undertaking a major building program at its present location less than a block from the original site in the 1880s. It is considered to be the first commercial brewery at the head of the lakes. Due to its increasing scale of production, Fitger's was a major employer in the Duluth area, producing more than 100,000 barrels a year. In 1890, Fitger's installed the first modern ice-making machinery in any Minnesota brewery. During the years of Prohibition, Fitger's attested to its flexibility and strength of survival in adapting to production of soft drinks and other products, thus continuing its economic contribution to the community. This flexibility and independence are evident in the buildings of the complex which contribute to the overall brewery function; these range from stables, cooperages, bottling works, and storage sheds to the office, employees' bank, and brewhouse proper.

The Fitger Brewing Company consists of ten structures located along Superior Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues East on the eastern edge of Duluth's downtown business district. The property comprises approximately 2.2 acres and extends for about 320 feet along Superior Street; the total Lake Superior frontage is 720 feet. The structures are arranged in two parallel rows on two terraces between Superior Street and the shore of Lake Superior. A major feature is a stone retaining wall 30 feet high and over 580 feet long along the DM&IR railway tracks which defines the southern property line.

The Fitger Brewing Company buildings are best described as functional in character and design. Constructed of stone and brick, these structures reflect the uses to which they were put. In this aspect, it is important to note that the Fitger Brewing Company was not built as a single unit, but, rather, buildings were added as needed and as the company expanded. Similarly, at least four primary buildings which were once part of the early brewery have been demolished throughout the complex's development.

Exceptions to the utilitarian appearance of the brewery's various elements are the Stock Houses, Mill House, Office, and the Bottling Works which front on Superior Street. These facades are constructed of randomly-laid native basalt with sandstone quoins and window trim. The rusticated texture, semi-circular arched openings, and subtle polychrome are characteristic of the Richardsonian Romanesque style which found popularity with large-scale buildings during the last two decades of the 19th century. The treatment of the Fitger facades emphasize the scale and massiveness of the individual elements while at the same time unifying them into a cohesive and harmonious whole. As such, the buildings that front onto Superior Street are outstanding adaptations of the Richardsonian style as applied to purely functional industrial architecture.

The following is a summary description of the existing structures on the Fitger Brewing Company property:

(1) BOTTLING WORKS (Pivotal)

The Bottling Works is the easternmost element in the complex of buildings fronting onto Superior Street. It was constructed in 1907 in accordance with designs by Louis Lehl for a total cost of \$40,000. The building measures 118 by 75 feet and is two stories in height. The principal facade is faced in rusticated basalt and sandstone and is comprised of eight bays symmetrically arranged. The central six windows on the second story are capped with semi-circular arches. Windows on the first story have been altered with glass-block infill. The building is presently used for storage.

(2) OFFICE (Pivotal)

The Office was constructed in 1908 in accordance with designs by Louis Lehle for a cost of \$25,000. Like the adjacent bottling works, it is faced in rusticated basalt and sandstone. It is two stories in height, three bays wide, and symmetrical in arrangement. The building measures 35 by 85 feet. A stepped parapet is positioned over the center bay. This is the most elaborate structure in the complex from an interior standpoint, having a beamed ceiling with central stained glass skylight, stained and varnished woodwork, and an ornate bank teller's cage with cast iron vault. This building functioned both as administrative offices and as Fitger's banking operation for employees. The structure continues to serve as office for the complex.

(3) GYMNASIUM (Contributive)

Constructed in 1920, this one-story structure served as a storage building and a gymnasium for brewery employees and the general public. It is simple in detailing and faced in brick. It measures 57 by 72 feet. It is now vacant and in a deteriorating condition.

(4) MILL HOUSE and BREW HOUSE (Pivotal)

This four-story structure is actually comprised of two buildings sharing a common wall. The rear portion (Brew House) is the older of the two elements, being constructed in 1892-93. It and the adjoining Mill House, erected in 1900, are constructed of brick. The Mill House fronts onto Superior Street and boasts a distinctive facade of rusticated basalt and sandstone. It is two bays wide and capped by a parapet. The second and third stories are incorporated within two-story semi-circular arches. These buildings measures 26 by 95 feet. They are presently vacant. The Mill and Brew Houses were remodelled in 1906 under the direction of architect Louis Lehle.

(5) and (6) STOCK HOUSES #1 and #2 (Pivotal)

Stock Houses #1 and #2 are the westernmost elements in the portion of the brewery complex fronting onto Superior Street. Both structures are three stories in height and are distinguished by expansive facades of rusticated basalt and sandstone sparingly punctuated by small windows. These structures served as stock and aging houses for the beer produced in the adjacent mill and brew houses. Stock House #1 was constructed in 1886 and serves as the oldest element in the brewery complex. It was designed by architect F. W. Wolf (a partner of Louis Lehle) and measures 40 by 70 feet. Stock House #23 was constructed in 1899 by an unknown architect. It measures 50 by 95 feet. Both stock houses were slightly remodelled in 1902 and are presently vacant.

(7) STABLES AND GARAGE (Contributive)

The Stables and Garage is a utilitarian two-story brick building with segmental-arched window and door openings. It is situated at the far western end of the brewery property, isolated from the rest of the buildings in the complex. The building was designed by Louis Lehle and erected in 1911. It measures 62 by 89 feet and is presently in a vacant and deteriorating condition.

(8) WASH and RACKING HOUSE (Pivotal)

Designed by Louis Lehle and erected in 1903, the Wash and Racking House is comprised of two sections measuring 118 by 82 and 120 by 60 feet. Both sections are constructed of brick and are utilitarian in appearance with no ornamentation. The Wash and Racking House is presently vacant and in a deteriorating condition.

(9) BOILER HOUSE and SMOKESTACK (Pivotal)

The Boiler House is a two-story brick structure with segmentally-arched window openings. It was constructed in 1905 and measures 56 by 60 feet. The smokestack at the southeastern corner of the Boiler House is constructed of brick with a flaring cap and rises 100 feet in height. The boilers in this building are no longer utilized and the building is vacant and deteriorating. This structure was designed by Duluth architects Oliver Traphagen and Francis Fitzpatrick.

(10) ICE MACHINE BUILDING (Pivotal)

Erected in 1890 under the direction of the Consolidated Ice Machine Company, this building is trapezoidal in plan, measuring 51 feet in length at the western wall and 40 feet at the eastern wall; it is 40 feet wide. The building is constructed of brick and is two stories high. The design is utilitarian in nature with segmentally arched window openings. The Ice Machine Building is presently vacant and deteriorating.

Architects and Builders

<u>Structure</u>	<u>Date Built</u>	<u>Architect</u>	<u>Builder</u>	<u>Original Cost</u>
Stock House #1	1886	F. W. Wolf	Unknown	Unknown
Old Bottling Works	1888	W. Griesser	Unknown	Unknown
Stables & Barn	1889	Unknown	J.S. Pearce	\$1,500
Boiler, House & Boilers	1890	O. Traphagen	M. Miller	\$7,000
Ice Machinery Bldg.	1890	Consolidated Ice Machine Co.		
Brew House	1892-93	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Barn	1894	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Settling Room	1896	O. Traphagen	Schleness & Miller	
Stock House #2	1899	Unknown	M. Campbell	\$10,000
Mill House	1900	Unknown	G. E. Evans	\$22,840
Stock House #1 (remodeling)	1902	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Stock House #2	1902	Unknown	Lounsberry	\$8,500
Wash & Racking House	1903	L. Lehle	McLeod & Smith	\$8,500
Stock House #1 (remodeling)	1905	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Boiler House (remodeling)	1905	Unknown	McLeod & Smith	\$6,000
Smokestack	1905	G. Thomson	G. Thomson	Unknown
Mill & Brew House (remodeling)	1906	L. Lehle	Unknown	Unknown

Architects and Builders cont'd.

<u>Structure</u>	<u>Date Built</u>	<u>Architect</u>	<u>Builder</u>	<u>Original Cost</u>
Ice House	1906	W. A. Hunt	Unknown	\$2,000
Bottling Works	1907	L. Lehle	J.W. Hilliard	\$40,000
Office	1908	L. Lehle	J.W. Hilliard	\$25,000
Stables & Garage	1911	L. Lehle	McLeod & Smith	\$24,000
Ice House (remodeling)	1918	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Gymnasium	1920	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Wagon Shed	1925	Giliuson, Ellingsen, Erickson	Unknown	Unknown
Stone Retaining Wall	1928	C.D. Ferguson	Unknown	Unknown
Water Tower	1933	T.J. Shefchik	Unknown	Unknown
Pump House	1944	T.J. Shefchik	Unknown	Unknown
Bottling Works (remodeling)	1958	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Ice House (razed)	1964	--	--	--

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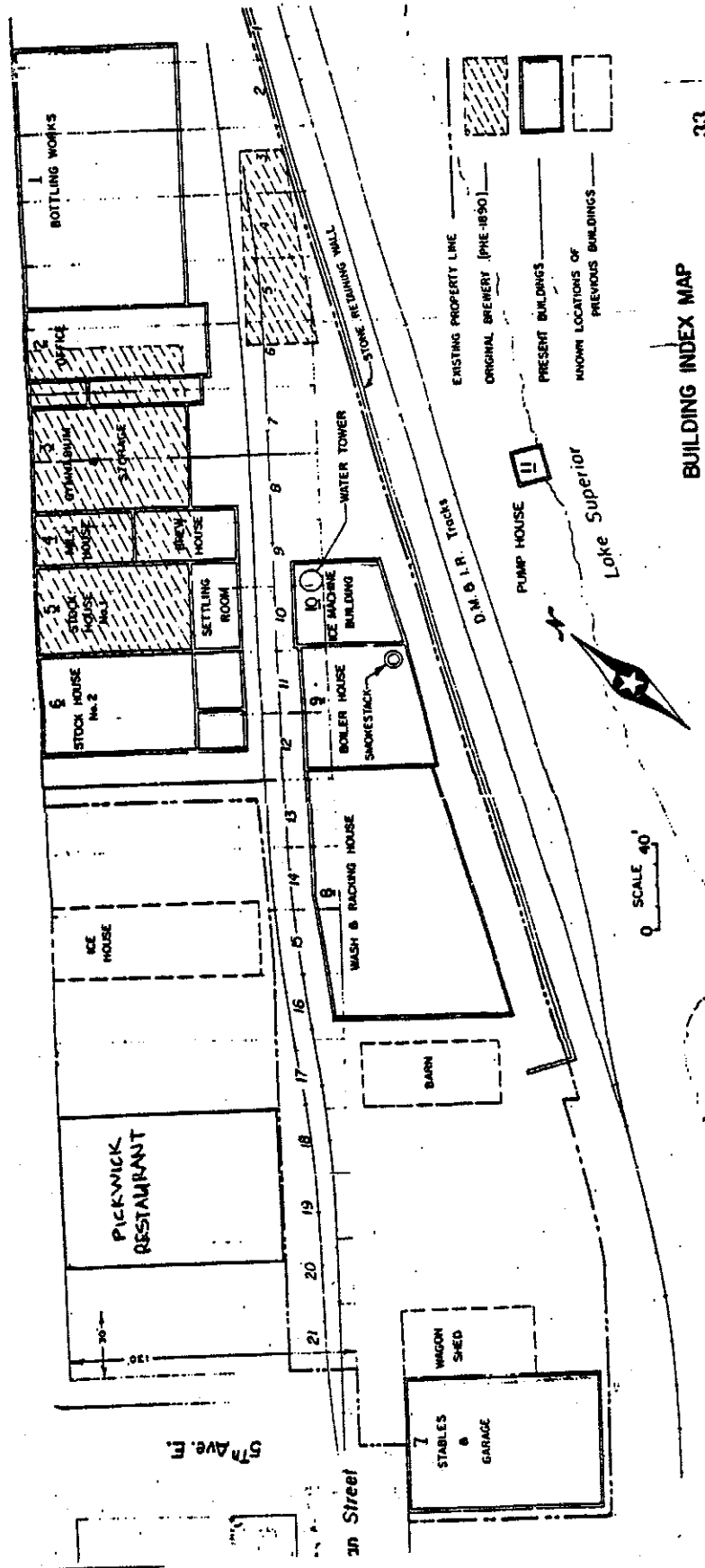
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BUILDING INDEX MAP

FITGER BREWING CO.

PREPARED BY:  
 MINN. HWY. DEPT.

SHEO ARCHITECTS, INC.  
 808 1/2 South Main Building  
 Minneapolis, MN 55402 (612) 227-1277

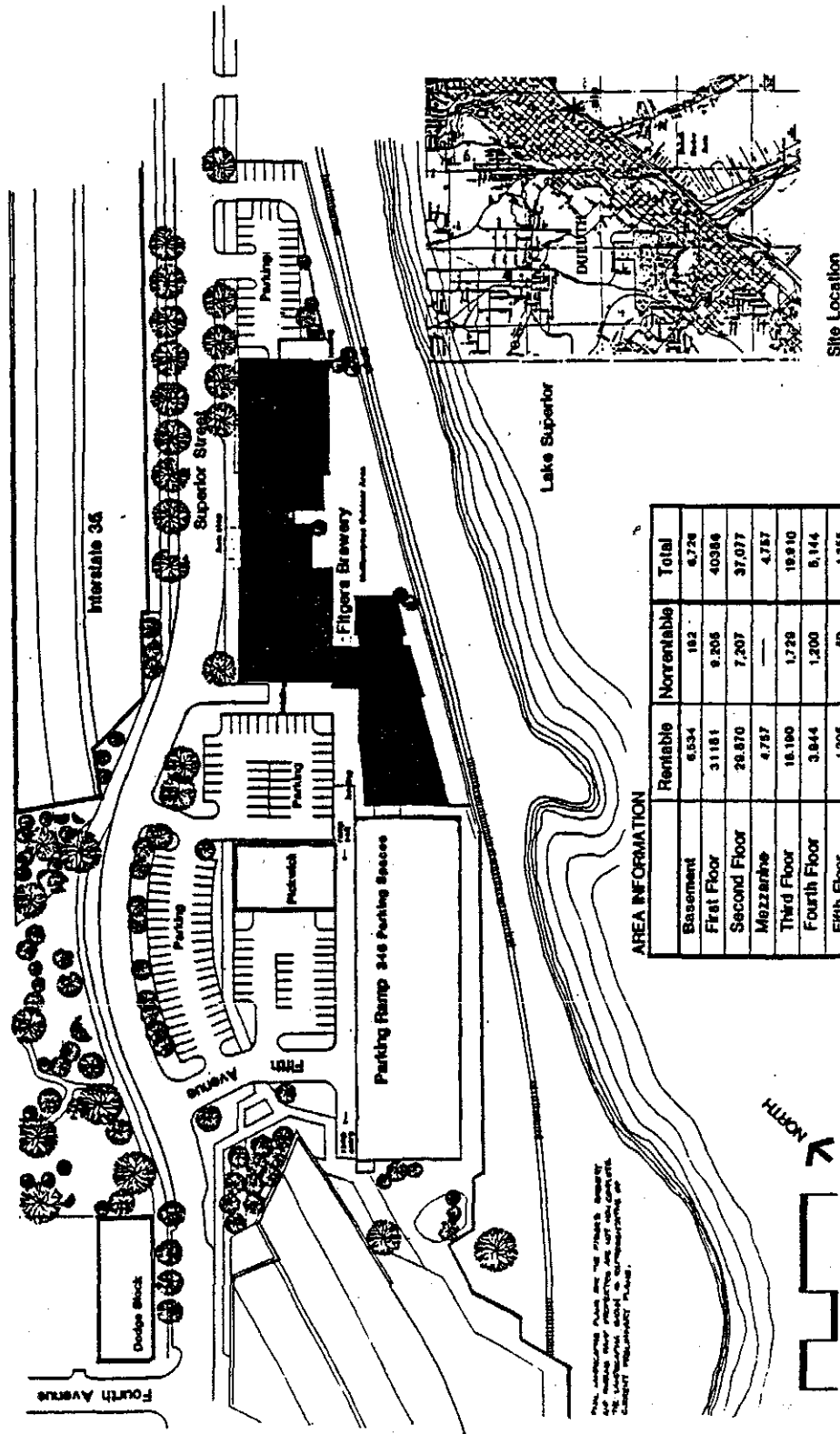
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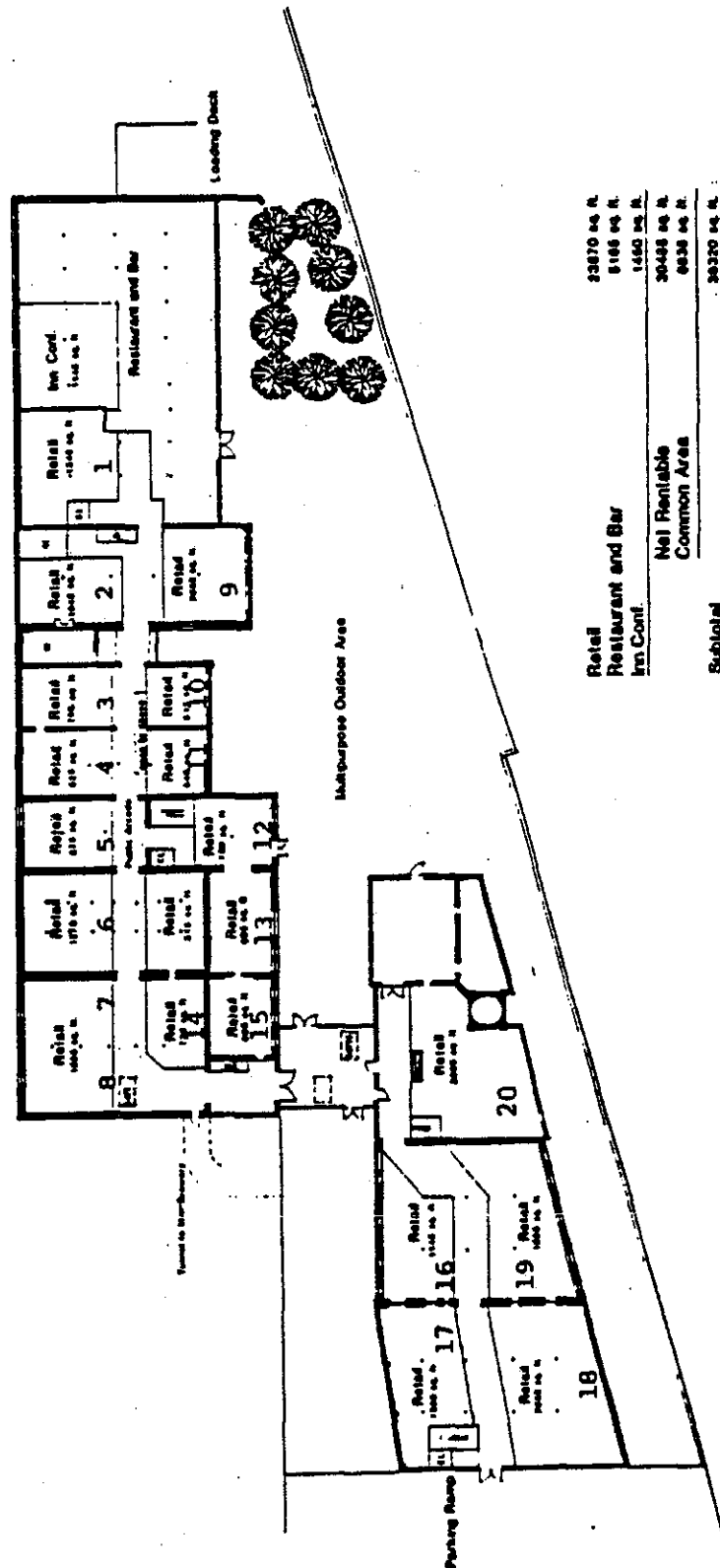
FITGER'S BREWERY  
 RENOVATION

Preliminary Site Plan

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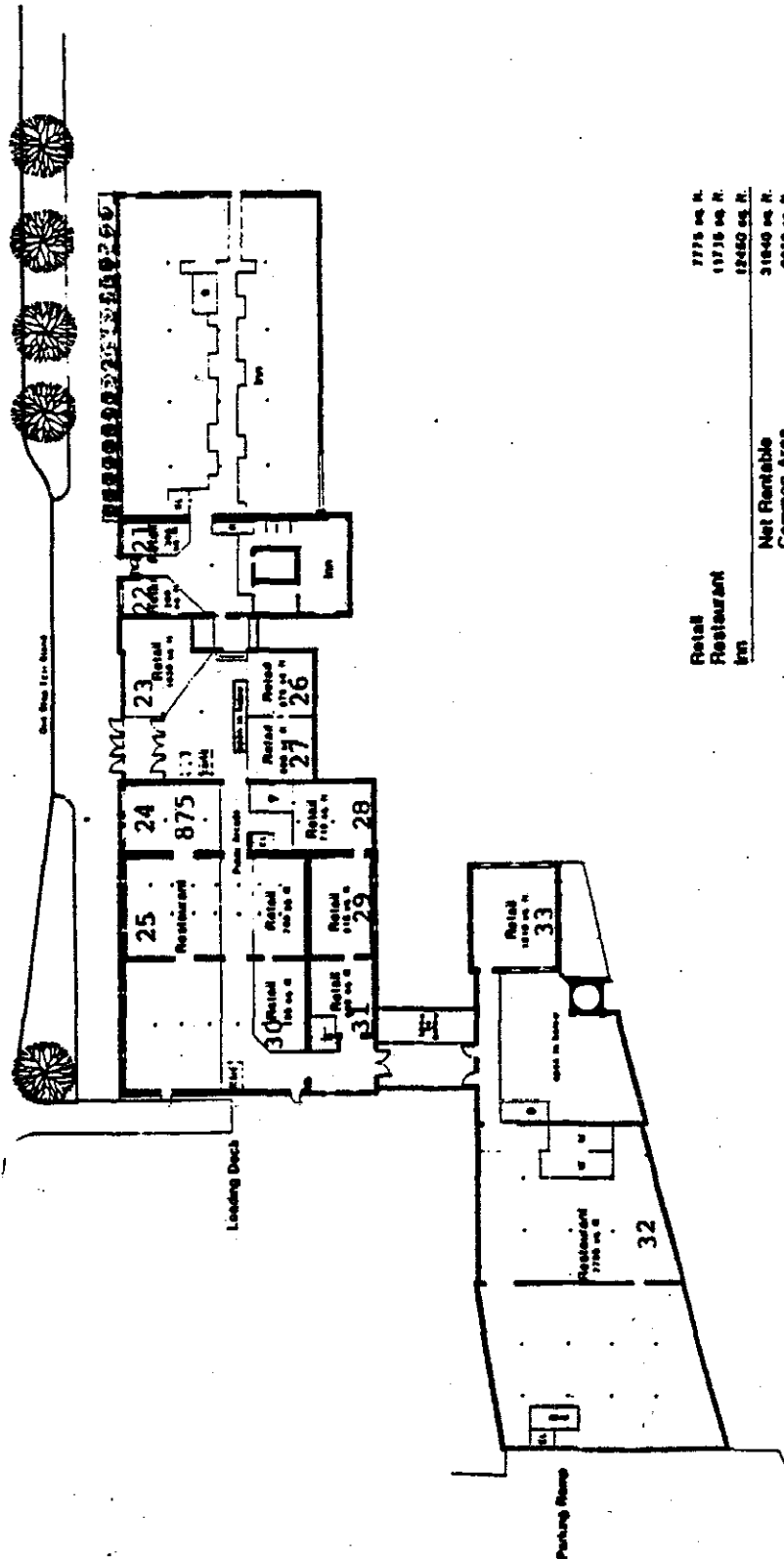


# FIRST FLOOR PLAN MICHIGAN STREET LEVEL



Retail	23070 sq. ft.
Restaurant and Bar	5105 sq. ft.
Im Conf.	1450 sq. ft.
	30425 sq. ft.
Net Rentable Common Area	8035 sq. ft.
Subtotal	38320 sq. ft.

# SECOND FLOOR PLAN SUPERIOR STREET LEVEL



Retail	7775 sq. ft.
Restaurant	11715 sq. ft.
Trm	12450 sq. ft.
Net Rentable	31940 sq. ft.
Common Area	6030 sq. ft.
Subtotal	37970 sq. ft.